

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1341

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, MO, AG, TS
SUBJECT: NORTH AFRICAN POLICY REVIEW

REF: A. STATE 102256, B. STATE 20643, C. ALGIERS 0371,
D. ALGIERS 0547

1. AS NOTED IN STATE 102256, MY VIEWS ON U.S. POLICY IN NORTH AFRICA ARE WELL-KNOWN IN THE DEPARTMENT. THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PAPER (STATE 20643) REFLECTS WELL MY CONCERNS ON THE BILATERAL US-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP. IN ADDITION, MY RECENT OBSERVATIONS ON THE CLIMATE OF OUR RELATIONS (ALGIERS 371) ARGUED FOR A CONTINUING EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THIS REGIME'S CURRENT OBJECTIVITY IN DEALING WITH US IN ORDER TO PERMIT THE CONTINUATION OF THE LIMITED INFLUENCE WE HAVE HERE. IN RECOMMENDING AGAINST A CONSCIOUS TOUGHENING OF OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD ALGERIA, ALGIERS 371 ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE PURSUIT OF OUR INTERESTS WOULD COMPEL US TO BE TOUGH ENOUGH.

2. IN MY VIEW, DEVELOPMENTS OF THE PAST TWO MONTHS HAVE BORNE OUT THESE POINTS. IN RETROSPECT, IT APPEARS THAT OUR PREVIOUS INTENSIVE LOBBYING ON THE TERRORISM QUESTION WAS AT LEAST IN PART RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GOA'S DECLARATION (ALGIERS 547) THAT IT WOULD NOT PERMIT HIJACKED AIRLINERS TO COME HERE UNLESS ALGERIAN CITIZENS WERE INVOLVED OR THE
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COMPETENT INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITIES SO REQUESTED. THE STATEMENT WAS A GURDGING ONE, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE ALGERIANS WILL CONTINUE TO DENY ACCESS TO HIJACKED AIRCRAFT AS THEY DID IN THE CASE OF THE CYPRIOT PLANE. NEVERTHELESS, THE DECLARATION STANDS, AND I LIKE TO THINK THAT OUR REPRESENTATIONS, BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL, IN HIGH ALGERIAN PLACES HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH ITS BEING

ISSUED.

3. ALSO, IN THE PAST TWO MONTHS THE SAHARA WAR HAS FORCED US TO BE TOUGH WITH BOTH THE ALGERIANS AND THE MOROCCANS. WE HAVE HAD TO MAKE A NUMBER OF VERY DIFFICULT APPROACHES TO THE MOROCCANS AT SOME COST, IT SEEMS TO ME, TO BILATERAL US-MOROCCAN RELATIONS, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM. SIMILARLY, OUR DEMARCHE TO THE ALGERIANS CRITICAL OF THEIR SUPPORT TO THE POLISARIO HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE IMPACT HERE, AND I SUSPECT WE HAVE NOT HEARD THE LAST OF THIS STORY.

4. YET ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN THE ALGERIAN ON AGAIN-OFF AGAIN REQUEST TO US FOR MEDIATION IN THE SAHARA. AT THE MOMENT, THIS INITIATIVE SEEMS MORE OFF THAN ON. AS WE HAVE NOTED PREVIOUSLY, IT APPEARS TO US THAT THERE IS LITTLE BASIS FOR OUR INVOLVEMENT IN A SAHARA MEDIATION AT THIS JUNCTURE, AND THAT THE ALGERIANS MADE THE REQUEST FIRST AS PART OF THEIR CONTINUING EFFORT TO MAKE THEMSELVES APPEAR REASONABLE AND ALSO TO GAUGE OUR ATTITUDE FOLLOWING THE POSTPONEMENT OF A DECISION ON THE SALE OF ARMS TO THE MOROCCANS FOR USE IN THE SAHARA. INDEED, IF THERE IS ANY BASIS IN FACT TO THE MOST RECENT SPATE OF RUMORS ON POSSIBLE INDIRECT AND DIRECT CONTACTS BETWEEN THE PARTIES TO THE SAHARA CONFLICT, THIS IS ALL THE MORE REASON FOR THE USG TO "WAIT AND SEE".

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5. WITH THE FOREGOING AS A PREAMBLE, I HAVE SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS TO OFFER ON OUR NORTH AFRICAN POLICY:

A. FIRST AND ABOVE ALL, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD TRY TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE TO TAKE THE SAHARA WAR OUT OF OUR DEALINGS WITH THE MAGHREB'S TWO PRINCIPAL POWERS. COMPETITION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM WILL CHARACTERIZE THEIR BILATERAL RELATIONS FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE IMPORTANT INTERESTS ON BOTH SIDES, AND WE SHOULD GET ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF SERVING THOSE INTERESTS. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF GENUINE WILLINGNESS ON THE TWO SIDES TO END THE SAHARA CONFLICT, BUT SHOULD GIVE NO SIGN AT THIS POINT THAT WE ARE SEEKING TO PLAY A MEDIATORY ROLE.

2. WE SHOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE ANY WEAKENING OF ALGERIAN "STEADFASTNESS" IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WE SENSE THAT THE ALGERIANS, LIKE THE SYRIANS, ARE GIVING LITTLE MORE THAN LIP SERVICE TO THE GOALS OF THE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT", AND THERE ARE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT THEIR MORE RADICAL BRETHREN ARE DISGRUNTLED AT THEIR FAILURE TO BACK THEIR WORDS WITH ACTION.

C. WE SHOULD DO ALL WE CAN TO MAKE THE ALGERIANS UNDERSTAND THAT OUR ECONOMIC POLICIES, ESPECIALLY OUR ENERGY POLICIES, ARE BASED ON OUR OVERALL NATIONAL INTERESTS AND NOT ON TRANSIENT BILATERAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. THIS WILL BE NECESSARY BECAUSE THE ALGERIANS TEND TO VIEW OUR DELAY IN APPROVING THE EL PASO II AND TENNECO LNG CONTRACTS AS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, AND WOULD BE LIKELY TO VIEW A DISAPPROVAL OF THE CONTRACTS IN THIS LIGHT.

D. WE SHOULD ALSO CONTINUE TO WELCOME THE GROWTH OF TECHNICAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL COLLABORATION AS A SIGN THAT WE ARE INTERESTED IN NORMAL BILATERAL RELATIONS ACROSS THE BOARD IN SPITE OF THE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES THAT AMAY
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EMERGE. THIS SIGNAL WILL HELP US MAINTAIN AND PERHAPS INCREASE OUR LIMITED LEVERAGE ON THE MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUES OF THE DAY AND WILL ALLOW US TO INFLUENCE THE THINKING OF THE ALGERIAN TECHNOCRATS AND OTHER EDUCATED CADRES NOW IN THE PROCESS OF FORMATION.

E. FINALLY, I URGE THAT A HIGH-LEVEL U.S. EMISSARY VISIT THE REGION ONCE THE CURRENT TURBULENCE SET UP BY THE MOROCCAN ARMS SALE ISSUE SUBSIDES. GIVEN HIS LONG EXPERIENCE IN THE MAGHREB, UNDER SECRETARY NEWSON WOULD BE A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR SUCH A MISSION. IN THIS SAME VEIN, I URGE THAT A FIRM DATE FOR THE RECENTLY POSTPONED STATE VISIT OF BOUMEDIENE BE SET SOONEST. . HE IS IN EVERY SENSE OF THE TERM THE LEADER OF HIS COUNTRY. BUT, ALAS, HIS DIRECT CONTACTS WITH THE WORLD OF WESTERN IDEALOGY HAVE BEEN TOO FEW TO HAVE INFLUENCED HIS THINKING. HE IS A QUICK AND INTELLIGENT OBSERVER FOR WHOM A VISIT TO THE U.S. CAN ONLY HELP FURTHER THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR GOALS HERE.

6. DEPT PLS PASS AT ITS DISCRETION TO MADRID, NOUAKCHOTT, PARIS, RABAT, TRIPOLI AND TUNIS.
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